

Te Whare Okioki via Leyland O'Brien Track, Kaimai Mamaku Conservation Park

Access to the Kaimai Ranges and its great range of day and multi-day trips is available from many road ends. One popular circuit, which involves a night at Te Whare Okioki, starts and finishes at the end of Whakamarama Road.

The circuit features a healthy forest, bubbling and picturesque streams, a comfortable hut and tracks that volunteers work hard to keep in good order to be enjoyed by people of all abilities.

At times the track follows old logging tramlines – a legacy of activity over several decades. Fortunately, more drastic plans for the destruction of Kaimai forest were stopped in the 1980s thanks to a concerted conservation effort involving many people.

After leaving the car park, pick up the Leyland O'Brien Tramway Track heading southwards. This soon runs alongside the Ngamuwahine River. The few crossings are manageable in normal flows.

The junction with the Ngamuwahine Track was once named Cookhouse Clearing – you can imagine what a busy, popular place this was for the loggers.

Key features of tramway tracks are straight lines and large cuttings to provide easy gradients for log wagons. Apart from occasional abrupt dips where trestle bridges once existed, walking is easy.

At the junction with the North South Track, turn right and follow it northwards, noting other interesting options here for future trips. The old tramway formation lasts another 1km, after which the track becomes a standard tramping track, working its way to a crossing of the Ngamuwahine Stream. Easy in normal flows, after heavy rain it is impassable. On a hot day, check upstream for a refreshing dip.

The 12-bunk Te Whare Okioki, constructed and maintained by the Kaimai Ridgeway Trust, is then reached. (Old maps show this as the Ngamuwahine Shelter.) This provides a comfortable overnight stop with camping spots in the clearing.

Continue to follow the North South Track northwards, then turn east on the Ngamarama Track, an hour north of the hut. The lower reaches of this track are again through old tramway cuttings, before it drops down a hill to the Leyland O'Brien Track and the car park.

Wild File

Access Whakamarama Road.

Grade Moderate

Time 10hr (two days)

Distance 22km

Topo50 map BD36

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